

# Caregiver Connection

March 2011

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers.  
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION

March is national Social Work Month, a time to recognize the contributions social workers make to the lives of children and their families. The national theme is "Social Workers Change Futures". In Washington, social workers change someone's future every day. Here is one story:

## You saved my life!

A flicker of recognition passed across the face of the young woman in the grocery store as she spotted her former social worker, Diana Gray across the shopping aisle.

The young woman walked up to Diana and said, "You don't remember me, do you?" The answer: "No, I'm sorry I don't."

"You saved my life," the young woman said. What an amazing thing to hear in such an unexpected setting.

As she looked at her, Diana, now retired, realized she previously had worked with this young woman as a child on her caseload.

Perhaps she had seen possibilities in this child, the child could not see in herself; but Diana refused to let her fail. She worked to arrange every possible service for her, including Casey Family Programs, a national program to help youth - just like this one.

Diana and the Casey social workers pushed and prodded, never giving up, even during the tough times when the teen was in trouble with the law.

And even after the young woman left the child welfare system, she and Diana kept in touch periodically.

But slowly their paths diverged – until that day in the store.

That young woman is Arika Boutwell, now 33. Arika had made use of some of the resources Diana had found for her. She'd gone to college. She had obtained a Degree in Criminal Justice and worked for a while in that field, where she hoped she might be able to save other lives - as she said Diana had saved hers.

She found legal work did not satisfy her need to really help others, so she returned to school and obtained a Master's Degree in Public Administration. She now works as a program manager for the DSHS Division of Development Disabilities, helping people as she had been helped. She credits Diana and the Casey social workers with guiding her down the career path.

"When I was 14 or 15, I was really lost," she said. "Diana Gray was there for me at a really crucial, tough part of my life. She was my first permanent social worker. She helped me focus on school, regardless of circumstances. I could have been lost among the million kids I was around." Arika stated Diana had also given her a core value she continues to carry with her: "She was influential in being compassionate... she reinforced for me that we need to help others, whenever we can."

Social workers stand on the frontlines of the struggle to improve the lives of these children – to help whenever they can – for each child and their family is far more than just a number on their caseload. Each child is a special person they hold in their heart, as every day they not only do their jobs, but like Diana Gray, they do all they can to ensure their safety, permanence, well-being and success.

Thousands of children in Washington State are living better lives today due to the exceptional work social workers have done and will continue to do. The care and passion with which they carry out their responsibilities, is the reason to honor and recognize them this month. They save lives.



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## Medical payment for kids in care

Questions have come up recently about what to do if you take a foster child to the doctor and the office wants you to sign a form saying you may be responsible for payment.

### Here are the policies and rules around that issue:

Foster parents and caregivers should not pay for any medically related services, medications, or equipment provided to a child in their care. However, caregivers should make sure that the medical provider accepts the DSHS Services Card before making an appointment. If you are told by a doctor or medical provider that you will need to pay for the foster child's medical service, prescription, or equipment call the Foster Care Medical Team immediately at 1-800-562-3022 ext. 15480. (This number is available 7:30 AM – 5:00 PM Monday through Friday.)

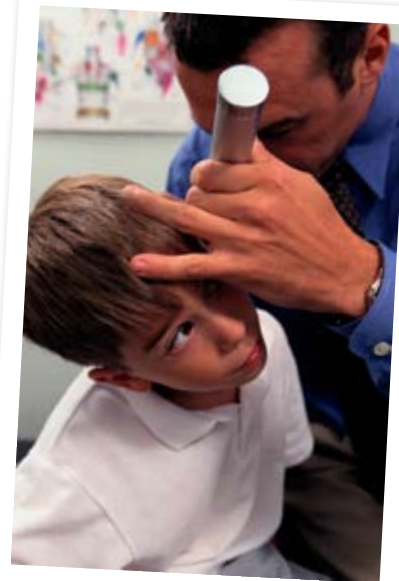
Medical and pharmacy providers should call the Medicaid Coordination of Benefits (COB) toll free number if there is a concern that the child has other medical insurance besides Medicaid. The COB number is: 1-800-562-3022 ext. 16134. COB will assist the provider in appropriately billing the other insurance company as well as Medicaid for the service, medication, or equipment.

Per Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 388-502-0160 (1) (2): "A provider may not bill, demand, collect, or accept payment from a client or anyone on the client's behalf for a covered service. The client is not responsible to pay for a covered service even if the DSHS Medicaid Purchasing Administration (MPA) does not pay for the service because the provider failed to satisfy the con-

ditions or payment in MPA billing instructions, this chapter, and other chapters regulating the specific type of service provided."

Medical providers sign a "Core Provider Agreement" with the DSHS Medicaid Purchasing Administration. The agreement states that the medical, pharmacy, or equipment provider is responsible for verifying the client's eligibility for coverage on the date of service and must check for any limitations of the client's medical coverage.

If you have paid for a service, medication, or equipment that you think should have been covered by the child's Medicaid eligibility, call the Foster Care Medical Team – even if you haven't received a bill at: 1-800-562-3022 ext. 15480 to discuss and resolve this issue. Caregivers may also email the Foster Care Medical Team at: FCMT@dshs.wa.gov.



IN BRIEF

## The science of early brain development

SECOND IN THE SERIES



Caregiver Connection continues with the second of a four-part series on the science of early childhood development from the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. This is very helpful information for foster parents and caregivers regarding issues they may encounter with infants and young children who are placed in their care.

This edition provides information on the science of early brain development, which can inform investments in early childhood. These basic concepts, established over decades of neuroscience and behavioral research, help illustrate why child development – particularly from birth to five years – is a foundation for a prosperous and sustainable society.

- Brains are built over time, from the bottom up
- The interactive influences of genes and experience shape the developing brain
- The brain's capacity for change decreases with age
- Cognitive, emotional and social capacities are intertwined and impossible to separate throughout the life course
- Toxic stress damages developing brain architecture, which can lead to lifelong problems in learning, behavior and physical and mental health.

There is a tremendous amount of information available that all caregivers of young children will appreciate and can utilize. Go to <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/> for more information.

## Help for housing with youth aging out of foster care

Studies have shown many young people are in and out of their family homes until age 25. Foster youth do not have this option. However, they do have other options to help them with their housing needs as they transition from foster care.

For example, foster youth can participate in the Independent/Transitional Living and/or Foster Care to 21 program. And for those youth pursuing postsecondary education, some money from the Passport to College Scholarship, and the Education and Training Voucher Program can be used for housing needs on a case by case basis. These and other resources can all be found at [www.independence.wa.gov](http://www.independence.wa.gov).

There are also other specific housing assistance programs available to foster youth administered by the Washington State Department of Commerce. Each program has its own funding source and eligibility specifically designed to help reduce homelessness.

### Transitional Housing Operating and Rent program (THOR)

The THOR program helps with rent, deposits, and case management to assist families in developing a plan to create permanent housing. To be eligible for this program, the youth must be a dependent of the state. To view a map of THOR providers in the WA state, please go to the web site link below: The link opens up a map. Click the back arrow on the page to get information about specific locations in the state.

<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=200792842860428220926.000442da287d9c1bc5816&om=1&ll=47.189712,-120.432129&spn=3.277423,7.020264&z=7>

- Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) provides rental assistance, but has no funding for case management services like THOR.
- The Emergency Shelter Assistant Program (ESAP), Overnight Youth Shelter (OYS), and Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) programs are all overnight shelter programs.
- The Independent Youth Housing Program (IYHP) and the Homeless Grant Assistant Program (HGAP) both provide support to youth. In IYHP, youth can stay in the program up to 5 years from ages 18-23. IYHP is available in all parts of the state except Snohomish, Skagit, Whatcom, Island and San Juan counties.

### Family Unification Program (FUP)

Unlike the programs listed above, this is a federal grant program providing rental assistance. This money is used to help provide stable housing for young adults (ages 18-21) who have aged-out of the foster care system. These vouchers allow a family to rent housing from a private landlord. Money from this program generally pays 30 percent of the family's monthly adjusted gross income towards rent and utilities. This is available in limited numbers and areas.

### Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA)

The HOPWA program provides housing assistance and support services to low-income people with HIV/AIDS and related diseases, and their families (except in King and Snohomish counties who have their own programs). This support helps prevent homelessness, stabilizes current housing situations, and assists people in accessing healthcare and other support. Contact Mollie Gaspar: 360-725-2943 or [mollie.gaspar@commerce.wa.gov](mailto:mollie.gaspar@commerce.wa.gov).

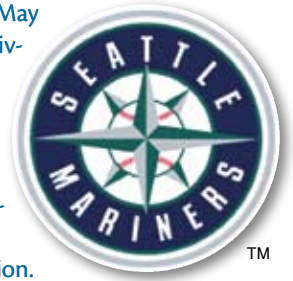
For more information about all these programs contact: Jim Pritchard, Program Manager Children's Administration at 360-902-8487 or by email at [Jim.Pritchard@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:Jim.Pritchard@dshs.wa.gov).

## Take mom out to the ball game

Again this year, the Seattle Mariners are offering special discount prices to foster parents and relative caregivers as part of We Are Family Day at Safeco Field.

The event this year will be held May 8, Mother's Day. It is the major event celebrating May as the month dedicated to caregivers. Last year, more than 2,800 people attended the event. Get details on this great event at the site below. We will have more information about specific activities associated with the game in next month's Caregiver Connection.

Hope to see you at the ball park!  
[http://seattle.mariners.mlb.com/sea/ticketing/special\\_group.jsp?group=wearefamily](http://seattle.mariners.mlb.com/sea/ticketing/special_group.jsp?group=wearefamily)



## Foster care and your taxes

Many foster parents ask CA staff for information about how foster care payments relate to their taxes. CA can't dispense tax advice and also can't guide you as to whether a tax deduction may apply. However, here is some information that may be helpful to you:

- Seek guidance on this issue from your tax preparer
- Your foster child's CA social worker can release the child's Social Security number to you for tax preparation purposes when:
  - you provide written notice from your tax preparer he/she believes the foster parent is entitled to a deduction
  - the foster parent prepares their own tax return, and submits written notification they believe they are entitled to a deduction.
- An e-mail or note from the tax preparer is acceptable. It doesn't need to be a lengthy letter. For questions regarding claiming exemptions/dependents or any other tax related questions, the IRS is available at 1-800-829-1040 or [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)
- DSHS Office of Accounting Services at [taxinfo@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:taxinfo@dshs.wa.gov) can help providers and vendors with:
  - Requests for copies of tax documents sent by DSHS to the provider
  - Address changes
  - Adjusting tax documents to reflect repayment of overpayments
  - IRS correspondence that the provider has received about DSHS payments



# Important numbers to know when you take care of children in out-of-home care

**Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868**

## ON-GOING AND CRISIS SUPPORTS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Under contracts with the state, three private agencies are working to build supports for you within the foster care community. Supports include hubs, support groups, and matching new foster parents with veteran foster parents. To get connected:

- If you live in Eastern Washington, the Olympic Peninsula down through Pacific County or from Thurston County to Clark County, call 1-888-794-1794.
- If you live in King County or any counties north of King County, call 206-605-0664.
- If you live in Pierce or Kitsap counties, call 253-473-9252.
- If you live in King County, the Friends of Youth CARE program provides short-term counseling, education and support to help you care for your most difficult children. 1-888-263-3457 or 206-915-0459.

**Family Help Line:** 1-800-932-HOPE or [www.parenttrust.org](http://www.parenttrust.org). The Family Help Line is a free, statewide training and referral line for the families of Washington state. Last year, the Family Help Line received more than 5,000 calls and requests for information. Calls can last up to 90 minutes and parents can call as often as needed.

**Support for foster parents under investigation for allegations of abuse or neglect:** Foster Parent Investigation Retention Support Team (FIRST) 253-219-6782. Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., or leave a message and receive a return call within 24 hours.

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

**Mental Health Crisis Line Information:** The crisis line telephone number for your county or region is available on the DSHS Mental Health Division website at: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/crisis.shtml>.

## GENERAL FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

**FPAWS:** Foster Parent Association of Washington State is an all volunteer non-profit association. It is led by experienced caregivers who provide support and helpful services to all caregivers (foster, adoptive, and kinship) in Washington State. In addition, FPAWS advocates for caregivers with Washington's legislative officials, all levels of Children's Administration staff and other community service providers to enhance the child welfare system. Contact FPAWS at [fpaws.org](http://fpaws.org) or 1-800-391-CARE (2273).

Kitsap and Pierce County information about becoming a foster parent or to receive foster parent support: Foster Care Resource Network, 253-473-9252. Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or leave a message and receive a return call by the next business day.

## RESOURCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE STATEWIDE

Get connected to information on resources in your area by calling 211 – a toll free number.

Girl Scouts of Western Washington: Fostering a Future: [MeccaYS@girlscouts.org](mailto:MeccaYS@girlscouts.org)

Women, Infant and Children Program (WIC):

<http://www.parenthelp123.org/resources/food-resources>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Website: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Training Website – Trainings are open to all licensed foster parents, licensed relative caregivers and unlicensed caregivers. For information about foster parent and caregiver training, check out:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp>

## CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION FOSTER CARE LISTSERV

Join the 2,200 people who have subscribed to the List Serve

<http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=fosterparents&&A=1> for updated information on resources for the work you do in caring for children.

Family Planning Services are designed to help avoid unwanted or mistimed pregnancy and are available through your local Community Service Office (CSO). Each CSO has a full time Family Planning Nurse to help provide services to Medicaid eligible clients.

There is also a Family Planning hotline number 1-800-770-4334.



## Staying healthy



The Chronic Disease Self-Management Program, also known as Living a Healthy Life or Living Well, was developed at Stanford University to help people with chronic health conditions live healthier lives.

The Chronic Disease Self-Management Program is a workshop where people with different chronic diseases attend together. It teaches the skills needed in the day-to-day management of treatment and to maintain and/or increase life's activities.

This six week workshop teaches practical skills for living a healthy life with an ongoing condition such as asthma, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and arthritis. Developed by Stanford University's Patient Education Department, the workshop is designed to help people learn to manage their chronic conditions and improve the quality of their lives.

These workshops are available in communities across Washington State and are available either free or at a very low cost based on the ability to pay for the workshop or insurance benefit coverage.

For more information on workshop information as well as other healthy living information please visit our website at <http://livingwell.doh.wa.gov>, or contact Maureen Lally or Candy Goehring with Aging and Disability Services Administration at 1-800-422-3263.

